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SUBJECT: TIP IN TURKEY: TURKISH MEDIA ATTENTION, Feb 11-15, 2005

1. (U) In response to G/TIP inquiries, national and international media sources published the following news articles about TIP in Turkey. Text of articles originally published in Turkish is provided through unofficial local FSN translation.

12. (U) Published Sunday, February 13 by the Turkish Daily News; <http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/>:

TITLE: Turkey eyes 'model' success in human trafficking fight; By Fatma Demirelli

BEGIN TEXT: ANKARA - Turkish Daily News

On Jan. 11, Turkish newspapers published the appalling story of a 21-year-old Ukrainian woman, identified as Tatyana Litvinenko, who was rescued in a police raid on an Istanbul brothel, where she was forced into prostitution. The woman, reported the newspapers, came to Turkey in July of last year when she was seven months pregnant in hope of working as a babysitter before she ended up in the hands of a transnational human trafficking gang operating the brothel. Her captors were not moved by her plea that she could not have sex because of her pregnancy. A week after she gave birth to her baby, one of the captors pushed chewing gum into the baby's mouth and killed it because the mother was spending too much time taking care of the kid, rather than the clients.

Tatyana is one of dozens of desperate women, mostly from former Soviet bloc countries, where unemployment is high and opportunities are few, coming to Turkey in hope of changing their lives for the better but eventually ending up being trafficked by crime gangs primarily for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Over the last few years, trafficking in persons, women in particular, has grown at an alarming rate in the region and Turkey, as a preferred destination, has had its share from the surging crime.

Vast economic opportunities that are further increasing in parallel to growing prospects for eventual European Union membership and ensuing stability, geographic proximity and a liberal visa regime have attracted increasingly many would-be migrants from Eastern Europe and former Soviet bloc countries in search of better living conditions to Turkey over the past years. This situation, in turn, is heavily exploited by human traffickers, who sometimes lure young women with promises of regular employment but which ultimately results in forced prostitution, debt and various forms of abuse including forced confinement, control of personal documents and passports and threats.

Estimates of how many people are being trafficked in Turkey are difficult to locate. A total of 262 people were identified as victims of trafficking by the Turkish police and gendarmerie in 2004, a figure that officials say is only the "tip of the iceberg."

Ready to take the challenge: Turkish authorities say they are aware of the problem and are prepared to accept the challenge to make Turkey the country dealing most effectively with the problem of human trafficking in the region. Pressure on Ankara to improve anti-trafficking efforts has increased in recent years in connection with its bid to join the European Union. Ankara admits international pressure but says its growing efforts are guided by a desire to combat one of the worst forms of human trafficking rather than simply to respond to an outside demand.

"We, as Turkey, are aiming at becoming a model country in the Caucasus, the Balkans and the Middle East in terms of combating human trafficking," taking the most advanced measures among the countries of the region, said Ambassador Murat Ersavci, the director-general for consular affairs at the Foreign Ministry, who also heads a national task force in charge of coordinating anti-trafficking efforts. "Our efforts towards this goal are very serious."

In an annual report examining the situation in world countries in the fight against human trafficking, the U.S. State Department placed Turkey in Tier 3, the worst category of countries that do not comply with the minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so in its report in 2003. That assessment improved in the 2004 report, which placed Turkey on the Tier 2 watch list for its determination to make significant efforts at combating trafficking, waiting to see implementation of the pledged steps for a possible upgrade to Tier 2.

Ersavci said Turkey hoped to be moved to Tier 2 in the 2005 report, expected to be released in the coming months, with the eventual goal of joining the Tier 1 countries.

The Organization for International Migration (IOM), which Turkey joined as a full member in November 2004, is hopeful that Turkey is set for a better assessment after all the progress it has recently achieved.

Commending the increasing efficiency of Turkish law enforcement authorities in identifying and referring victims of human trafficking to the IOM for assistance, Marielle Sander-Lindstrom, chief of mission of IOM's Turkey office, said Turkey's efforts are "fantastic."

"To me, it proves what I thought at the beginning, that Turkey has so much capacity and potential to actually have a significant impact on human trafficking, that if we can support Turkey now, when we have that window of opportunity, then we can do something positive for the entire region," she said.

Over the last couple of years Turkey has amended its penal code, the Law on Work Permits for Foreigners and the Citizenship Law, introducing a stronger legal basis to fight trafficking. The new Turkish Penal Code (TCK), which will become effective as of April of this year, introduces heavier punishment for traffickers, up to 12 years in prison and a fine. Changes in the Citizenship Law make passage of a provisional period of three years compulsory before a foreigner can request Turkish citizenship for being married to a Turk, a step taking aim at the trafficking of women through false marriages. Through the changes in the Law on Work Permits, foreigners can be legally employed in some additional categories, including domestic service.

In another legal step to make the fight against human trafficking more effective, the Interior Ministry has allowed a humanitarian visa for identified victims of human trafficking if they do not want to return home immediately or if they agree to testify against traffickers in court.

Turkish authorities, working in cooperation with the IOM, have also organized a number of training sessions for law enforcement officers, the police and gendarmerie, and judicial personnel to raise awareness on trafficking and give them skills to identify a victim of human trafficking, the very first step in dealing with the problem.

Sander-Lindstrom said the number of victims referred to IOM for assistance went up to 62 in 2004, a dramatic increase from only two in 2002, a sign of the success of the training. The heightened awareness among law enforcement personnel will also hopefully save trafficking victims from being "dumped" at the borders of the source countries as any irregular migrant, a practice, according to both the U.S. State Department and the IOM, that would leave victims vulnerable to re-trafficking.

Hotline 111 for victims:

On the more practical side, an NGO-managed shelter facility for victims of trafficking was set up in Istanbul in November, following a high-profile ceremony for the signing of a protocol on the establishment of the facility held in June and attended by then U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell and Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul. A similar facility is planned to soon be operational in Ankara.

A telephone hotline, starting with 0 800, has been put into service for help calls from victims of human trafficking. A toll-free, three-digit number, 111, will soon be operational to receive calls from across Turkey.

The Turkish government is also in touch with those regional countries which most of the victims of trafficking come from, including Ukraine, Moldova, Russia, Bulgaria, Romania, Georgia and Azerbaijan. The

interior ministries of Turkey and Belarus signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation in July 2004.

The cost of catching up:

Despite the progress, the level of awareness among law enforcement bodies and the judiciary remains weak, and public awareness is even weaker. The "fine line" between forced prostitution as a victim of trafficking and prostitution as such is for the most part blurred in the eyes of the public. Victims also often lack access to assistance they need, such as legal and psychological counseling, shelter, medical assistance, because they are lumped together with illegal immigrants for not having the proper legal documents and in some cases dumped at the border, only to be reinserted into the trafficking cycle by traffickers.

Implementation of the legal steps taken to raise awareness is a task that needs further effort and requires more financial resources. And allocating more money to fight against human trafficking is difficult for a country like Turkey, which not only faces trafficking but also must have enough resources to deal with dramatic flows of illegal migrants from Asia, the Middle East and Africa.

Assisting the victims is also a huge task with a heavy financial cost. The IOM's advice is to build up the ability of NGOs to provide assistance for victims, including shelter, and to involve civil society in providing protection and health and legal assistance.

"It's a lot to ask of Turkey," said Sander-Lindstrom, adding, "But Turkey is taking its responsibility as a destination country." END TEXT.

13. (U) Published Sunday, February 13 by the Turkish Daily News; <http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/>:

TITLE: Campaign aims to build anti-trafficking capability

BEGIN TEXT: In an attempt to boost efforts and capabilities for combating human trafficking through information and stepped-up law enforcement, the government last week launched the "Counter-Trafficking Now!" campaign. The \$700,000 project is funded by the U.S. government and will be implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

As part of the project some 100,000 women and girls aged 15-45 from source countries in the former Soviet bloc will receive leaflets with information about human trafficking and the number of a three-digit telephone hotline for emergency assistance. The leaflets will be in the form of passport inserts obtained upon arrival in Turkey.

The project envisages providing training to 150 police and gendarmerie personnel on the realities and causes of human trafficking as well as on key laws dealing with the issue. Some 150 victims will also receive shelter and medical and other assistance as part of the one-year project. END TEXT.

14. (U) Published Sunday, February 13 by the Turkish Daily News; <http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/>:

TITLE: 'Modern-day slavery' preys on the vulnerable
BEGIN TEXT: ANKARA - Turkish Daily News

Although its geographic location heavily exposes Turkey to the trafficking of persons from surrounding countries, it is by no means the only country suffering from this growing problem. The U.S. State Department estimates that between 600,000-800,000 men, women and children are trafficked across international borders as modern-day slaves for forced prostitution, working in quarries and sweatshops and in general involuntary servitude. Millions more are trafficked within their home countries.

Economic hardship, political instability and civil war at home are driving forces behind the 21st century slave trade. The trade, in turn, feeds a global demand for cheap and vulnerable labor. Women and children are particularly vulnerable. Estimates show that of the 600,000-800,000 people trafficked across borders each year, 70 percent are female and 50 percent are children. Traders' ploys are creative and ruthless, ranging from promises of marriage to regular employment or just a "vacation" in another country. END TEXT.

15. (U) Published Sunday, February 13 by the Turkish Daily

TITLE: Set to work against human trafficking

BEGIN TEXT: ANKARA - Turkish Daily News

Responding to a pressing need to develop better ways of coping with one of the worst forms of human rights violations as well as to growing outside pressure from the European Union and the United States to improve its poor standards for dealing with the problem, Turkey is modifying its legislation and implementing practical measures to combat the growing trafficking of women from former Soviet countries in its territory by means of a nationwide undertaking.

As the latest step in a series of efforts over the last couple of years, the government has launched a campaign to help victims of human trafficking through measures such as the setting up of an emergency telephone hotline and the distribution of leaflets to some 100,000 women and girls aged 15-45 from former Soviet countries that include information about human trafficking. The leaflets will be in the form of passport inserts obtained upon arrival in Turkey.

According to the Turkish Foreign Ministry, which coordinates implementation of a national Action Plan to fight against human trafficking, Turkey will soon become a "model country" in the vast region covering the Balkans, the Middle East and the Caucasus for its high efficiency in the fight against the trading of women, men and children for sexual and labor exploitation, a reproduction in the modern day of old-world slavery. END TEXT.

16. (U) Published Saturday, February 12 by the Turkish Daily News; <http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/>:

TITLE: Turkey launches campaign for trafficking victims

BEGIN TEXT: The Turkish government yesterday launched a campaign to help victims of human trafficking by setting up an emergency telephone hotline and distributing leaflets to some 100,000 women and girls aged 15-45 from former Soviet countries that include information about human trafficking. The leaflets will be in the form of passport inserts obtained upon arrival in Turkey.

The \$700,000 project is funded by the U.S. government and implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), officials told a press conference. The 111 line will operate 24 hours a day and will be staffed mainly by Russian speakers for women who are forced into prostitution in Turkey by organized trafficking gangs.

The project is the latest in a series of steps Turkey has taken to improve its efforts to combat trafficking after it was placed on a special watch list by the U.S. State Department last year. The number of victims of trafficking were 239 in 2004 according to official data, but the figures may be far from reflecting the real situation.

The "Counter-Trafficking Now!" campaign also includes plans to train Turkish law enforcement officers on the realities of human trafficking.

Many women from the ex-Soviet Union, notably from Black Sea states such as Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, work as prostitutes in Turkey, especially in Istanbul and the coastal resorts.

The lucrative trade in women and children for sexual purposes by criminal gangs has become a major problem across Europe in recent years. END TEXT.

17. (U) Published Friday, February 11 by Reuters:

BEGIN TEXT: ANKARA, Feb 11 (Reuters) - Turkey will set up a telephone hotline to help victims of human trafficking, mostly women from the former Soviet Union, officials said on Friday.

The hotline will be staffed mainly by Russian speakers for the women who are brought to Turkey by criminal gangs and forced into prostitution.

Language problems are believed to be a major obstacle that prevents victims from going to the police. The project for the "111" line, which will operate 24-hours a day, was funded mainly by the United States.

Murat Ersavci of the Foreign Ministry told reporters

the line would provide medical and psychological help. Official figures show 239 women were victims of trafficking in Turkey in 2004, up from 102 the previous year. But officials say they suspect these figures are the tip of the iceberg.

Many women from the ex-Soviet Union, notably from Black Sea states such as Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, work as prostitutes in Turkey, especially in Istanbul and the coastal resorts.

The lucrative trade in women and children for sexual purposes by criminal gangs has become a major problem across Europe in recent years. END TEXT.

18. (U) Published Friday, February 11 by Radikal; By Hilal Koylu; <http://www.radikal.com.tr/>:

BEGIN TEXT: Turkey, which was presented as one of the countries that "does not exert efforts" for prevention of human trafficking in the yearly report of the US State Department, will start a special campaign against human traffickers. The campaign will be publicized with the slogan "end to modern slavery."

The campaign will be conducted under the coordination of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its priority goal shall be saving women taking "refuge" from the hands of human traffickers. Within the framework of the campaign, new shelters in Ankara, Izmir and Antalya will be added to the one operating in Istanbul.

An "emergency-help" telephone hotline to give service in Russian and Turkish will be activated. The "111" hotline number may be used by all victims. The IOM shall closely follow the campaign. The IOM officials said "we will conduct the campaign with the MFA. It is very important to develop a special goal and understanding vis-a-vis the women who suffer." The MFA also said that this campaign is very important and that "this time all units of the state have been put into action."

Turkey is viewed by both the US and the EU as good in "legal arrangements and protection" in the fight against human trafficking, but in order to eliminate the mishaps faced in practice it will introduce such campaigns frequently. Promising "I will improve further," Turkey prepared the following report card for itself in the fight against human trafficking:

- Turkey is a signatory of UN Children Rights Charter.
- The TGNA approved the UN Convention Against Transborder Organized Crime and Protocol on Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling.
- Article 80 of the new Penal Code, which will enter into effect on April 1, defined human trafficking. The punishment for human trafficking will be an 8-12 year jail sentence.
- The Law on Working Permits for Foreigners has entered into effect.
- In order to prevent fake marriages for the purpose of obtaining foreigners' work permits, a rule was introduced requiring five years continuous residence in Turkey for foreign spouses and children to be able to work.
- The National Task Force to Struggle Against Human Trafficking was established. The organization rescued more than 60 women from traffickers and it established a shelter where victims can get legal, psychological and medical counsel.
- Within the Interior Ministry a Branch Directorate on Human Movements was established. END TEXT.

19. (U) Published Friday, February 11 by Milliyet; By Utku Cakirozer; <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/>:

BEGIN TEXT: With the financial support of the US administration, a project for the prevention of human trafficking and sex slavery will be started. According to the project which will be publicized today, an "emergency assistance hotline" that women who are brought to Turkey from former Eastern Bloc countries and forced to work in the prostitution sector can call will be created. In addition, shelters will be established for the rehabilitation of victims. In the US State Department's latest human trafficking report in 2004, Turkey was put in the group of countries that are "under monitoring." END TEXT.